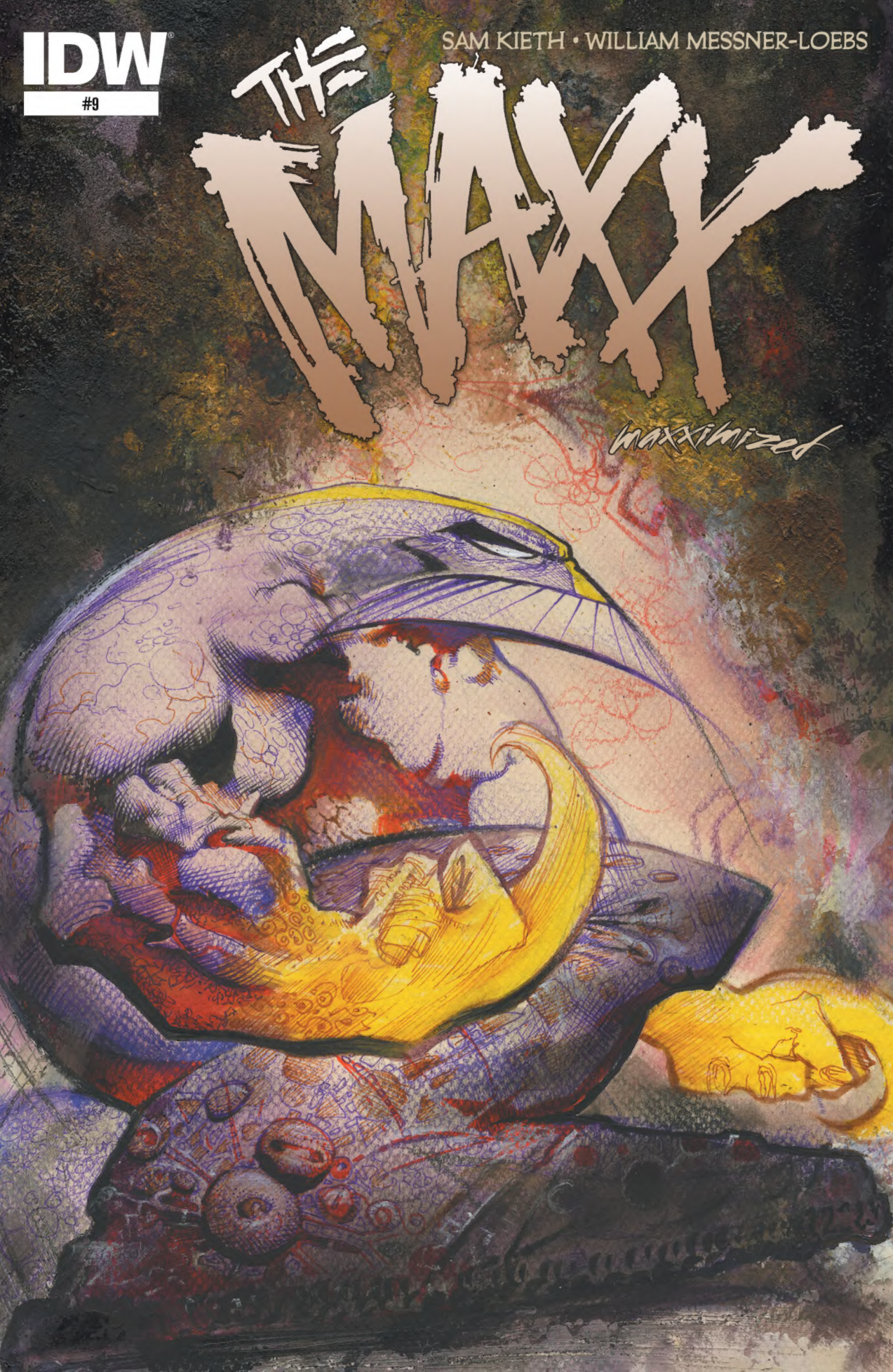
IDW
#9
SAM KIETH • WILLIAM MESSNER-LOEBS
THE MAXX
maxximized

THE MAXX MAXXIMIZED

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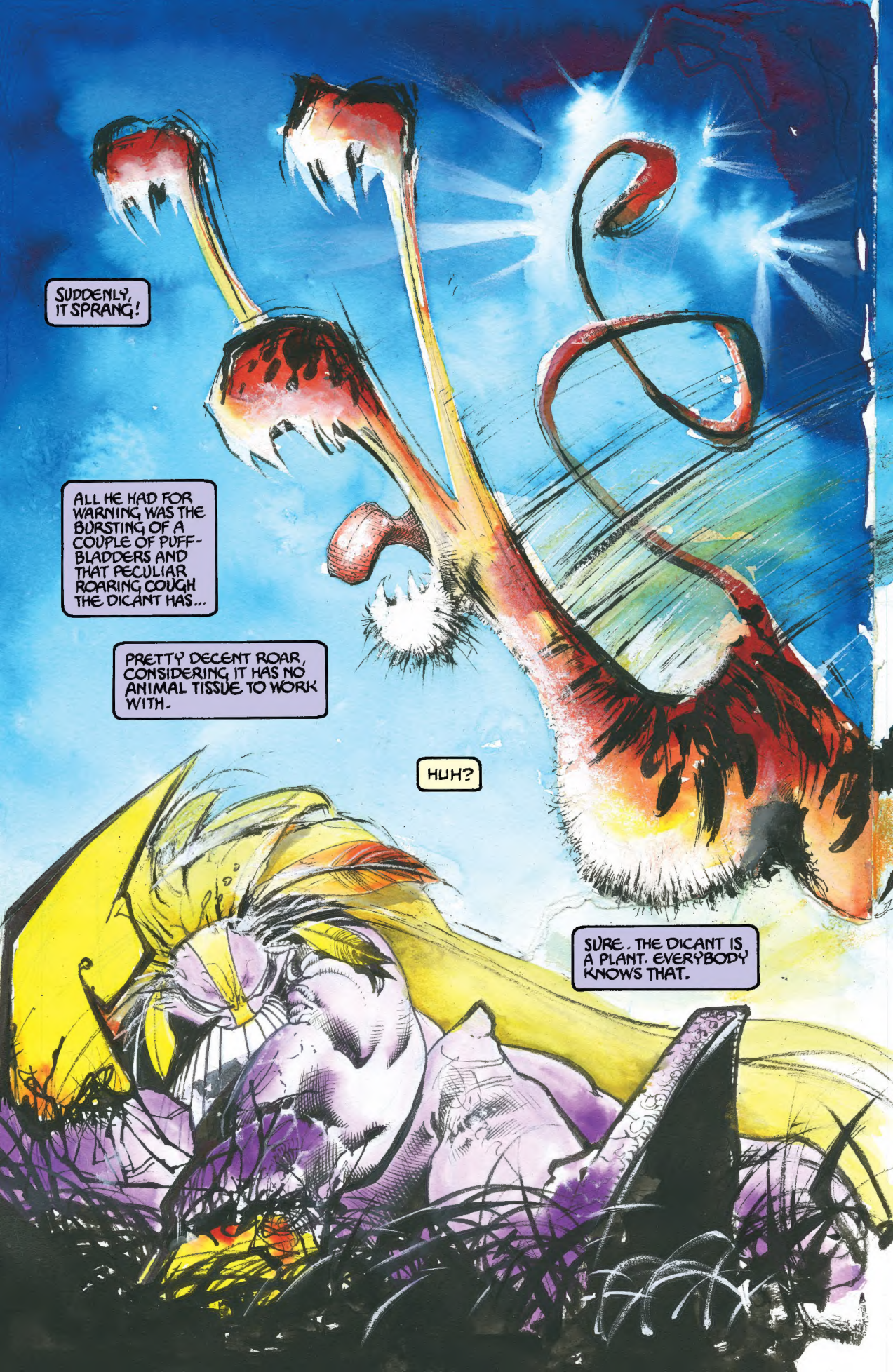
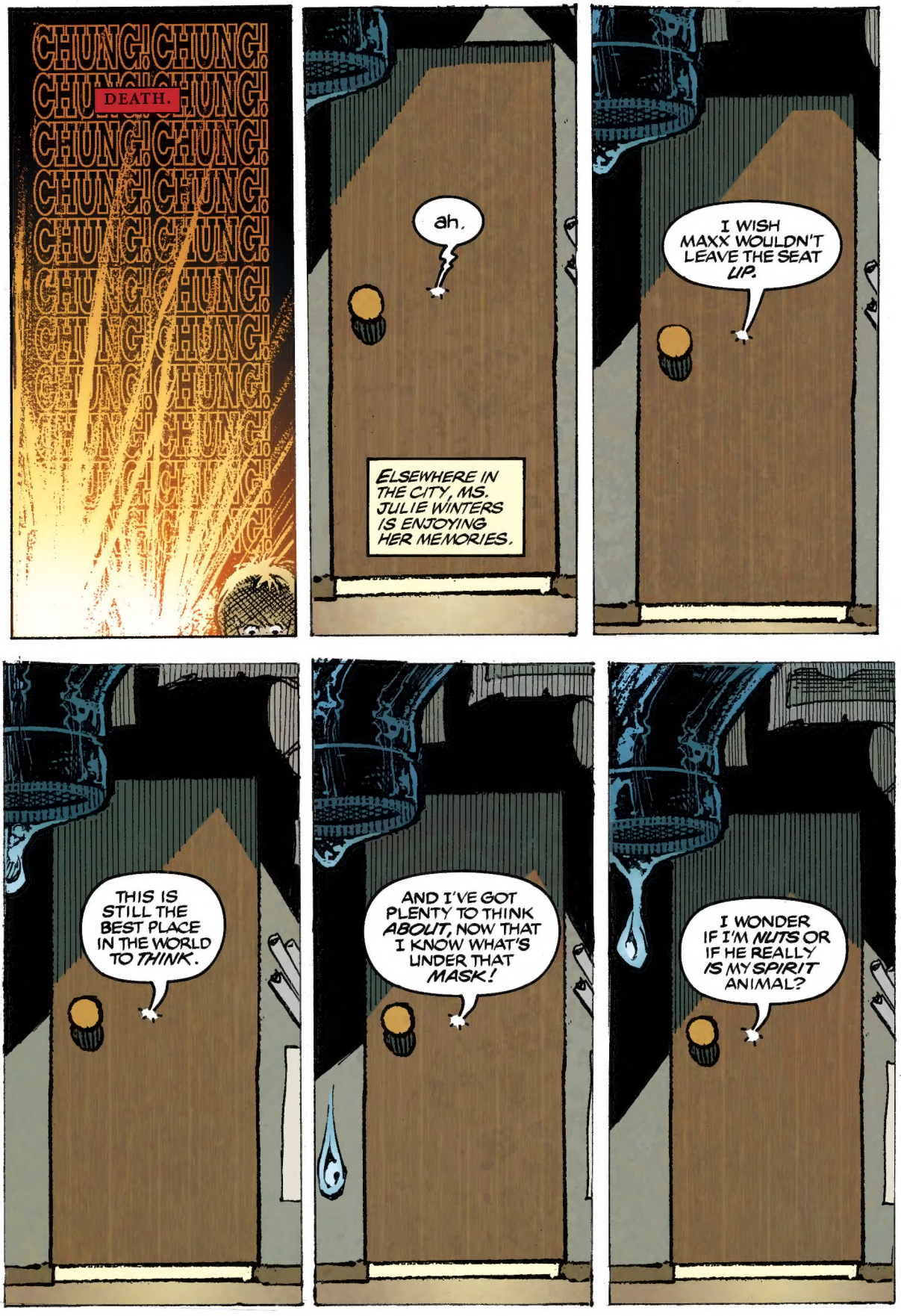
CLICK...WHRRR... THIS IS A RECORDING...
HIYA, DOC.
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE WONDERING WHY YOU'VE BEEN TIED UP, DRAGGED OUT OF THE MORGUE, CARRIED INTO THE BASEMENT OF THE ABANDONED BULLDOG JAR RUBBER FACTORY, THROUGH A BATHROOM DECORATED IN A COW MOTIF, AND ARE PRESENTLY IN THE DARK, SURROUNDED BY DARK BLUE, CANNABILISTIC HOMUNCULI.
EVERYONE DOES.
MEEP
MEEP
MEEP
MEEP
MEEP

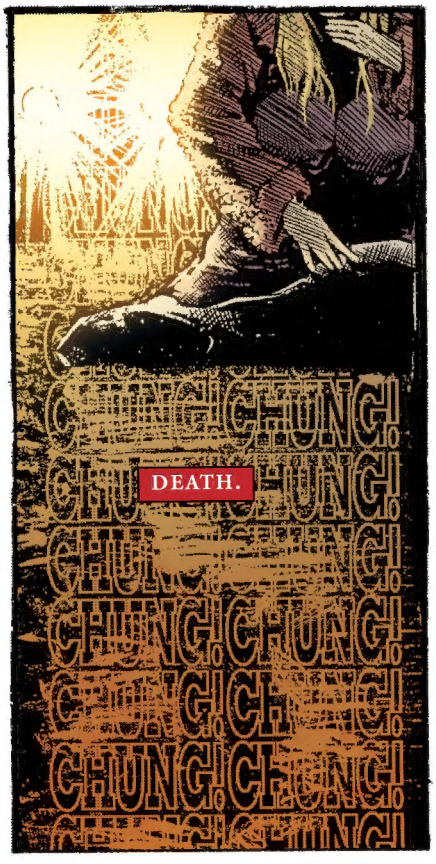
BUT FIRST, LEMMEE TELL YOU ABOUT A COUPLE OF THE OTHER THINGS THAT ARE HAPPENING AROUND THIS WIDE-OPEN, GLORIOUS CITY WE CALL HOME...
GLORIE, ARE YOU COMING BACK TO SCHOOL THIS YEAR?
DUNNO.
THERE'S THERAPY AN' STUFF, I DON'T REALLY FEEL...SAFE ANYWHERE, Y'KNOW? NOT AFTER WHAT HAPPENED AN' ALL...
WHO WOULD? AFTER ALL, YOU WERE MESSED UP PRETTY BAD BY THAT GUY...
MR. GONE. BOY, I WISH I C'D GET HOLD OF THAT SLIMEBALL! I'D *BREAK* HIS *SPINE* JUST LIKE *SHADOWHAWK!*
GRRR! ME TOO!
THANKS, GUYS, BUT...
HE'D JUST KILL YOU. HE'S TOO STRONG. I THOUGHT I WAS TOUGH, BUT I WAS *NOTHING.*

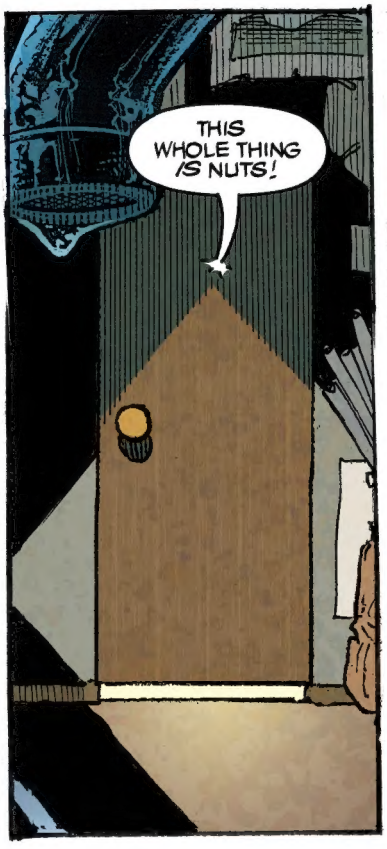
I THINK IT'S TIME FOR A STORY...
A STORY 'BOUT THE MAXX? OH, BOY!
IS THIS ONE GONNA MAKE SENSE?
THEY ALL MAKE SENSE.
AT LEAST TO ME.
ANYWAY, THE MAXX WAS RESTING ON THE VERDANT JUNGLE FLOOR OF THE OUTBACK, ALSO KNOWN AS PANGAEA, THE JUNGLE WORLD, WHEN A DICANT CAME SLINKING OVERHEAD...
A WHAT?
A DICANT! IT'S ONE OF THE MAJOR PREDATORS! WHAT DO THEY TEACH YOU KIDS IN SCHOOL?

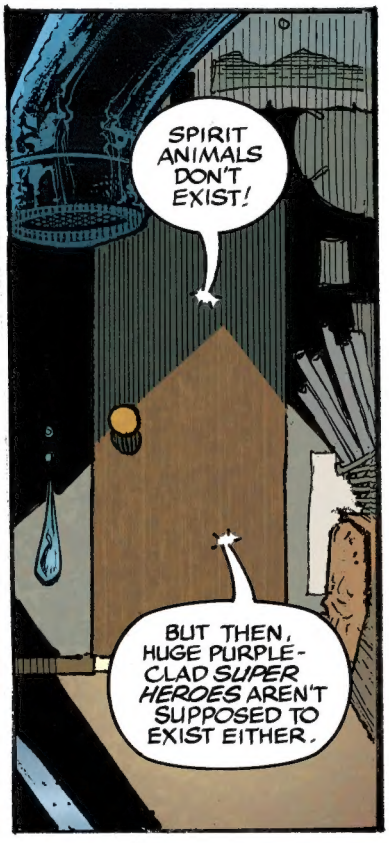

SUDDENLY, IT SPRANG!
ALL HE HAD FOR WARNING WAS THE BURSTING OF A COUPLE OF PUFF-BLADDERS AND THAT PECULIAR ROARING COUGH THE DICANT HAS...
PRETTY DECENT ROAR, CONSIDERING IT HAS NO ANIMAL TISSUE TO WORK WITH.
HUH?
SURE. THE DICANT IS A PLANT. EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT.


CHUNG! CHUNG!
CHUNG! CHUNG!
CHUNG! CHUNG!
CHUNG! CHUNG!
CHUNG! CHUNG!
CHUNG! CHUNG!
CHUNG! CHUNG!
CHUNG! CHUNG!
DEATH.
ah.
ELSEWHERE IN THE CITY, MS. JULIE WINTERS IS ENJOYING HER MEMORIES.
I WISH MAXX WOULDN'T LEAVE THE SEAT UP.
THIS IS STILL THE BEST PLACE IN THE WORLD TO THINK.
AND I'VE GOT PLENTY TO THINK ABOUT, NOW THAT I KNOW WHAT'S UNDER THAT MASK!
I WONDER IF I'M NUTS OR IF HE REALLY IS MY SPIRIT ANIMAL?

AS A MUTATED PLANT, THE DICANT DOESN'T HAVE VITAL ORGANS. IT HAS SPINES FOR TEETH AND A TOUGH, RUBBERY SHELL WHICH STRETCHES INSTEAD OF BREAKING.
IT'S AS STRONG AS A PANTHER AND BRIGHT AS CLOVER, AND HAS BROCCOLI'S SPASMS OF KILLING RAGE!
THE MAXX SLASHED IT AGAIN...
AND AGAIN!
AND AGAIN!!
TO NO AVAIL.


CHUNG.CHUNG.
CHUNG.CHUNG.
CHUNG.CHUNG.
CHUNG.CHUNG.
CHUNG.CHUNG.
DEATH.

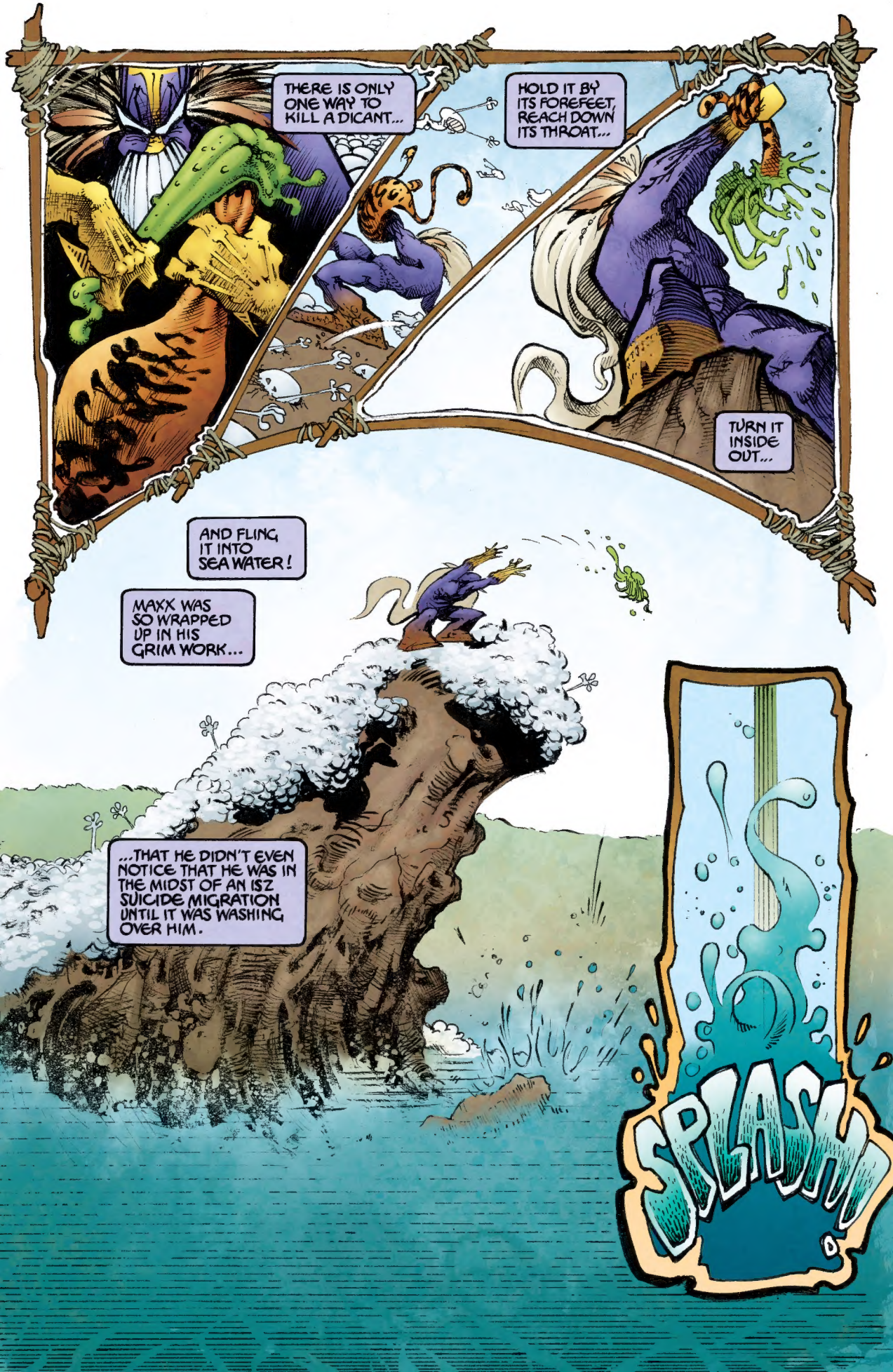

THIS WHOLE THING *IS* NUTS!

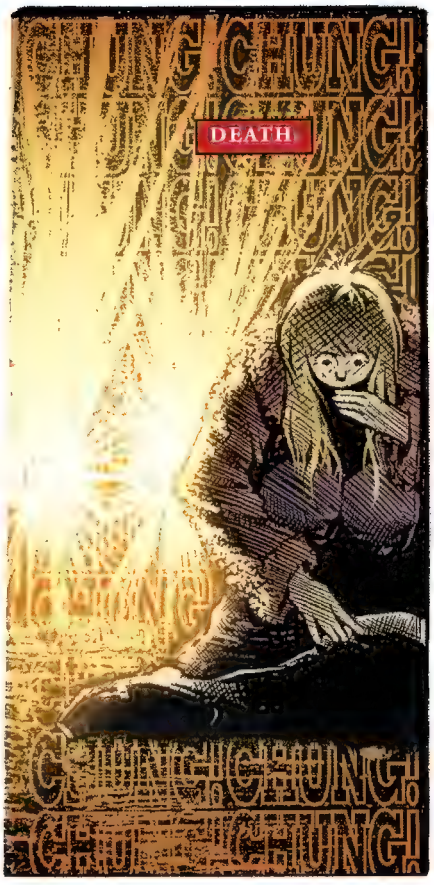

SPIRIT ANIMALS DON'T EXIST!
BUT THEN, HUGE PURPLE-CLAD *SUPER HEROES* AREN'T SUPPOSED TO EXIST EITHER.

AND I'VE BEEN TO THE *OUTBACK*. I'VE SEEN MAXX'S WEIRD WORLD FOR MYSELF.
THAT PSYCHOPATH MR. GONE IMPLIED I CREATED THE OUTBACK... THAT I WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR *EVERY-THING*.

NO NO *NO*... THERE'S *GOT* TO BE A WAY OUT OF THIS! SOME WAY TO...

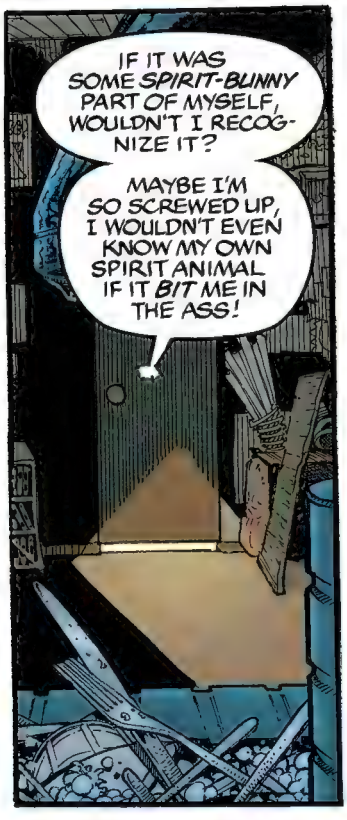
OH *GREAT!* THERE'S NO *PAPER!*


THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO KILL A DICANT...
HOLD IT BY ITS FOREFEET, REACH DOWN ITS THROAT...
TURN IT INSIDE OUT...
AND FLING IT INTO SEA WATER!
MAXX WAS SO WRAPPED UP IN HIS GRIM WORK...
...THAT HE DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE THAT HE WAS IN THE MIDST OF AN ISZ SUICIDE MIGRATION UNTIL IT WAS WASHING OVER HIM.
SPLASH!


CHUNG CHUNG
DEATH
CHUNG CHUNG
CHUNG CHUNG
CHUNG CHUNG

THAT *THING* I SAW BEHIND THE MASK *WASN'T* MAXX.
NOT THE MAXX *I* KNOW, ANYWAY.

BUT WHAT *WAS* IT?


IF IT WAS SOME *SPIRIT-BUNNY* PART OF MYSELF, WOULDN'T I RECOGNIZE IT?
MAYBE I'M SO SCREWED UP, I WOULDN'T EVEN KNOW MY OWN SPIRIT ANIMAL IF IT *BIT* ME IN THE ASS!

MAYBE I'M *NOT* SO SCREWED UP.
AND MAYBE THE *TOILET PAPER SPIRIT* WILL SHOW UP AND HAND ME SOME FRESH TOILET PAPER.

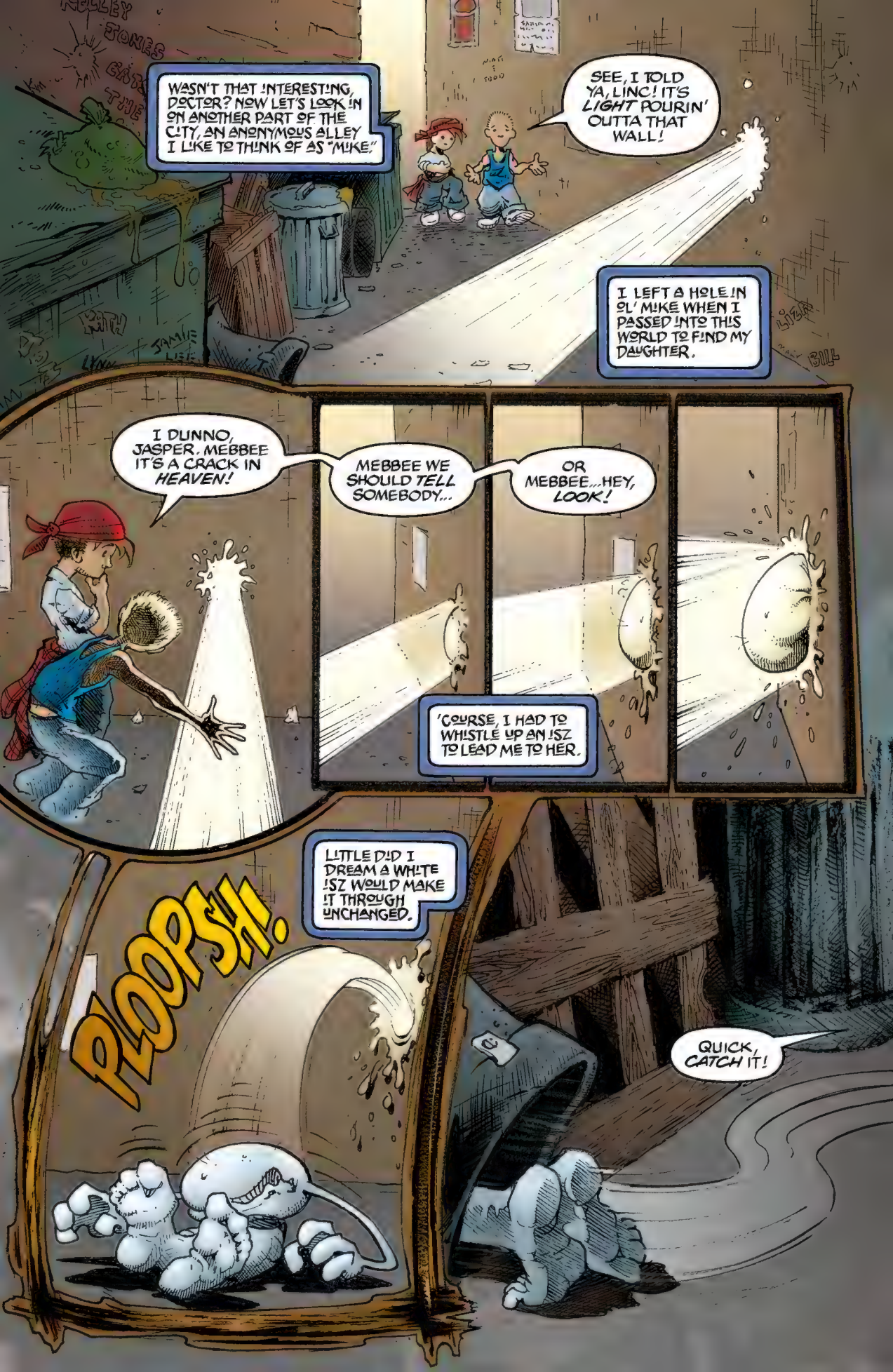
AAH, I PROBABLY DON'T EVEN *HAVE* A TOILET PAPER SPIRIT.

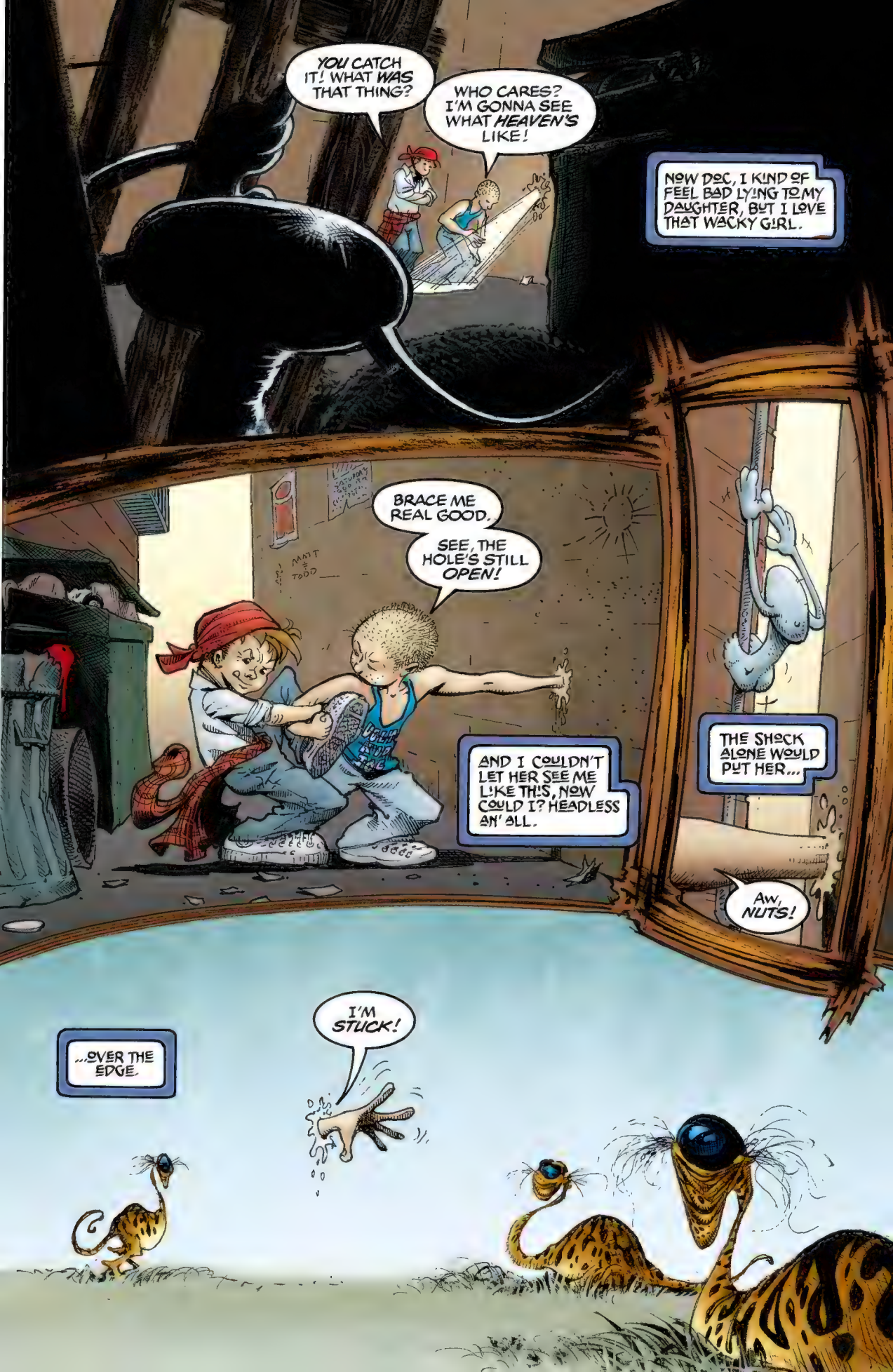
FOR A MOMENT MAXX WAS DISORIENTED. THEN HE REALIZED THAT HE HAD WANDERED INTO AN ISZ FIELD.
A BREEDING GROUND WHERE THE UNRIPE ISZ LIVE, FATTENING ON THE UNWARY...
...UNTIL THEY BREAK FREE IN A WAVE AND BEGIN THEIR LONG, DESTRUCTIVE MARCH TO THE SEA.
THEN HE SAW THE "MOUNTAINS THAT WALK."
CALLED "EMWITABWAY," OR "WALKING MOUNTAINS," THESE HUGE GUARDIANS ARE THE SLAVES OF THE SEEDBRINGERS. THEY KEEP CRABBITS AND FESTERMOLES FROM DINING ON UNRIPENED ISZ FLESH.
THEY ARE MANIACALLY STRONG AND FIERCELY LOYAL...
AND THEY KNOW ONLY ONE SONG.

THANK GOD FOR PAPER TOWELS.
Y'KNOW... LEAVING ASIDE THIS *BUNNY* STUFF... WHAT DO I REALLY KNOW ABOUT THE REAL-LIFE MAXX?
PRACTICALLY *NOTHING*. HE'S A TOTAL MYSTERY. HE COULD BE A *KILLER* FOR ALL I KNOW.
IT DOESN'T *FEEL* LIKE HE'S DANGEROUS...BUT I DON'T TRUST MY INSTINCTS ANYMORE.
THE SAD THING IS THAT FROM THE MINUTE MAXX PUT THE *MASK* ON, I'VE BEEN CONFUSING HIM WITH ALL MY BUNNY STUFF.
GOD, OUR RELATIONSHIP IS *SO TWISTED*. I'M NOT SURE WE CAN *EVER* REALLY UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER LIKE NORMAL PEOPLE.
I GUESS IT'S JUST A BUST.
I DON'T LIKE WHERE THIS IS GOING...AND NEITHER WILL HE.

THE EMWITABWAY TURNED TOWARDS HIM. THEIR EVERY MOVEMENT WAS RIPE WITH ANGER.
THEY WEREN'T SMART ENOUGH TO HAVE MORE THAN ONE EMOTION AT A TIME.
SUDDENLY, SOMETHING DROVE UP FROM UNDER THE ISZ AND PLOWED RIGHT AT THE MAXX.
THE ISZ FELL AWAY AND MAXX SAW IT CLEARLY.
HE WAS TRAPPED.
WHAT WAS IT?
WHAT HAPPENED?
WAS IT A GIANT SEUSSADON?
IT WAS A BUICK.

THAT'S STUPID!
A CAR?!
I TOLD YOU IT WOULDN'T MAKE ANY SENSE.
THAT IS SO LAME! JUNGLES AN' AIRWHALES AN'...
EVEN I KNOW THERE'S NO CARS IN THE OUTBACK.
I DON'T GET IT.
NEITHER DO I.


WASN'T THAT !NTEREST!NG, DOCTOR? NOW LET'S LOOK !N ON ANOTHER PART OF THE C!TY, AN ANONYMOUS ALLEY I LIKE TO TH!NK OF AS "M!KE."
SEE, I TOLD YA, LINC! IT'S LIGHT POURIN' OUTTA THAT WALL!
I LEFT A HOLE !N OL' M!KE WHEN I PASSED !NTO TH!S WORLD TO F!ND MY DAUGHTER.
I DUNNO, JASPER. MEBBEE IT'S A CRACK IN HEAVEN!
MEBBEE WE SHOULD TELL SOMEBODY...
OR MEBBEE...HEY, LOOK!
'COURSE, I HAD TO WH!STLE UP AN !SZ TO LEAD ME TO HER.
L!TTLE D!D I DREAM A WH!TE !SZ WOULD MAKE !T THROUGH UNCHANGED.
PLOOPSH!
QUICK, CATCH IT!


YOU CATCH IT! WHAT WAS THAT THING?
WHO CARES? I'M GONNA SEE WHAT HEAVEN'S LIKE!
NOW DOC, I KIND OF FEEL BAD LYING TO MY DAUGHTER, BUT I LOVE THAT WACKY GIRL.
BRACE ME REAL GOOD.
SEE, THE HOLE'S STILL OPEN!
AND I COULDN'T LET HER SEE ME LIKE THIS, NOW COULD I? HEADLESS AN' ALL.
THE SHOCK ALONE WOULD PUT HER...
AW, NUTS!
...OVER THE EDGE.
I'M STUCK!

TCH TCH! ANOTHER ATTEMPT BY MODERN MAN TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THE MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL WORLDS DOOMED TO FAILURE. LET'S SEE WHAT THAT WHITE ISZ IS UP TO!
THE POOR LITTLE BLIND GUY'S TREMBLING. NO WONDER, HE'S AFRAID. THIS WORLD'S COMPLETELY FOREIGN TO HIM!
EXCELLENT! IT IS RIGHT AT JULIE'S WINDOW! I CAN FEEL IT!
UNFORTUNATELY, ONLY ONE WHITE ISZ WAS CLOSE ENOUGH TO RESPOND TO MY INTERDIMENSIONAL MENTAL WHISTLE.
THE BLACK ISZES ARE SO MUCH SMARTER!
WELL, WE DO WHAT WE CAN!

NOTE THE WHITE ISZ SPIES UPON OUR HEROINE, AS MS. WINTERS IS ABOUT TO SAY...
EWWWW. THIS IS IT, ALL RIGHT. AND IT REALLY SMELLS PUTRID.
GEEZ. DID I BRING A CARTON OF FISH HOME AND FORGET TO REFRIGERA IT? HOW STUPID.
Uh, JULIE. THERE'S SOMETHING I GOTTA TELL YOU...
HI, SARAH. WHAT'S UP?
WELL... SEE, THERE WAS THIS... CLAY...
YOU DIDN'T BUY A BIG BOX OF MEAT AND LEAVE IT HERE, DID YOU?
NO, OF COURSE NOT. WHY WOULD YOU? NEVER MIND.

LET'S CRACK THIS BABY OPEN AND LEARN THE BAD NEWS!
SEE, I WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT MY SPIRIT ANIMAL...
WHAT ARE YOU BABBLING ABOUT, SARAH?
UM...
IT'S ALL MY FAULT...

JULIE, WAIT! DON'T TOUCH IT!
GOLLY... IT'S HORRIBLE!
IT'S DISGUSTING!
IT'S... IT'S... JUST MY...
IT'S SOME KINDA TRAP. I KNOW IT!
SARAH, HAVE YOU GONE BONKERS? I...
RRRRRRRR
OOPS!
OOOOOLLLL
SPLAT

...DAD.